



# **Hands Touching Hands**

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## Hands Touching Hands by Duck\_Life

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Richie Tozier

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**Summary:**

Among everything else that went down that summer, Eddie remembers his friends' hands, and how they felt clutching his own.

## Hands Touching Hands

That summer remains kind of a blur for Eddie. He remembers the stench of the sewers and the fear crawling up his throat and those terrible, terrible yellow eyes boring into him. He remembers laughing — a *lot* — Bev throwing her head back and Richie elbowing him in the ribs and Ben shaking in endless fits of giggles.

He remembers holding hands a lot, too. It wasn't a babyish thing, sometimes it wasn't even a fear thing. Sometimes it's just that you need that link between you and another person to remember that no matter how much it feels like it, you aren't the only person in the world who thinks and feels the way you do.

Ben's hands were always soft, and he had a stronger grip than Eddie did. They'd grip each other's hands and run after Mike and Richie, grey water splashing around their ankles. Beverly's hands were smaller and always cold, like a doctor's.

Mike had a lot of calluses on his hands from life on the farm. Sometimes when they were just lying out in the sun beside the barrens, he'd reach out and tug Eddie over by the hand so the two of them could watch a line of ants working together to steal Bill's potato chips.

Stan's hands were cold like Bev's, and his nails were just a little too long. If he was standing next to Eddie, they'd find each other's hands in the dark and squeeze tight, united in their terror, and he'd leave little half moon marks in Eddie's skin but Eddie was too scared to mind.

Bill, for all his stammering, had the steadiest hands of the group. Hands that didn't tremble, hands accustomed to hours of building scale models and gluing crafts and contraptions together. He'd take Eddie's hand and hold it tight because he was the leader, and the protector, and he wasn't about to let Eddie feel alone.

Richie usually squeezed his hand too tight, with his knobbly knuckles and sweaty palms, babbling on like he always did and punctuating every barb and joke by wringing Eddie's hand in the most annoying

way imaginable.

Eddie never wanted to let go.

When Eddie started panicking, Richie would grab his hand. When Eddie started complaining, Richie would grab his hand. When Eddie thought they were both about to die, Richie grabbed his hand and looked him in the face and it wasn't like it *fixed* anything, but it was, well, nice.

And in the fall, when they were all back at school and Mike was back on the farm and Bev was far, far away, when that summer started to feel like a bad dream, Richie would grab his hand under their desks and Eddie would remember the good bits in that nightmare of a summer. The barrens, the laughing. When they all held hands in a circle and swore they'd come back if they had to. They'd win again, if they had to.

Eddie doesn't reach for sanitizer or his aspirator so much anymore.

When he's scared, when he's sad, when he's happy, he reaches for Richie's hand.